

Draft Regional Recommendations Virginia Outdoors Plan

Thomas Jefferson Planning District (PD10)

Introduction to PDC Area

The Thomas Jefferson Planning District comprises Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa and Nelson counties and the City of Charlottesville. The region's western edge is in the mountainous Blue Ridge physiographic province. Forming the remainder, and the majority of the region, is the Piedmont physiographic province's rolling landscape.

This region is characterized by varied terrain, habitats, and vegetation types. Most of the region is primarily rural in nature except in the vicinity of Charlottesville, and in more developed areas along Interstate 64 and the Route 29 corridor north of Charlottesville. The presence of Lake Anna has provided the catalyst for the development of a large retirement community. Adding to the scenic beauty of the area are viewsheds of mountainsides, ridges and pastoral valleys.

The region abounds with scenic, natural, open space and historic resources; a legacy that Virginians have worked together to protect, as exhibited by Scenic River and Virginia Byway designations. Additionally, more than 28,110 acres in the region are under open space easements held primarily by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, thereby protecting the open space qualities of the affected land.

A number of rivers add to the scenic and environmental qualities of the area. Segments of the Rockfish, Rivanna and Moormans rivers have been designated as Virginia Scenic Rivers. The Rivanna River, designated in 2000 as an official project of the Save America's Treasures campaign by the National Trust of Historic Preservation, has been the focus of increased attention due to concern over the future of the water supply. Other important rivers in the area include the James, Tye, Mechums, North Anna, South Anna, Hardware and Piney. As with most regions in the commonwealth, there is a need for greater public access to the rivers.

Demographics

The region continues to experience a rapid growth rate, due in part expanding development pressure from the urban crescent but also to other factors like shifting workhabits that allow for more telecommuting. In 2000, the region had a population of 199,648. By 2005, the population had grown to 215,800 an increase of 8.1%. All the localities in the region experienced growth in that 5-year period. Future growth is anticipated to be rapid, with the population in the region projected to increase 21.3% to 253,800 in 2020 from its 2000 population level of 199,648. With housing unit estimates growing 23.2% from 2000 to 2005, Fluvanna County is ranked one of the 100 fastest growing counties in the United States.

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Demand/survey findings

In public meetings conducted in November of 2005, connectivity for alternative transportation emerged as a major issue. More bike paths (on and off-road), rail/trail projects, equestrian trails mountain bike trails and managed trails for off-highway vehicles are needed. Local parks should be connected to trunkline trail systems to enable citizens to walk or bicycle to points of interest. Trails on existing federal lands should be improved and extended to connect to communities.

Citizens expressed a desire for a dedicated funding source for land conservation, following models developed in other states. Initiatives are needed to increase the tree canopy in urban areas and to preserve large blocks of native forests in rural areas. More public lands, state parks and natural areas are needed to both conserve large tracts of land and create new opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Based on the 2006 *Virginia Outdoors Survey* and the facilities inventory, there is a significant shortage of tent camping facilities, off-highway vehicle trails, soccer and baseball fields and outdoor swimming and beach areas in this planning district.

Outdoor Recreation

The following are general recommendations related to outdoor recreation planning throughout the Commonwealth.

- Due to the increase in cultural and ethnic diversity in the Commonwealth, consideration should be given to making signs, literature and audio displays available in other languages.
- Local agencies in partnership with state and federal agencies should ensure that adequate supplies of recreation and open space are provided to meet demand and that those areas and facilities are adequately staffed, funded, and maintained. A dedicated funding source for the acquisition, management and maintenance of recreation areas and facilities should be considered a priority.
- Activity user groups along with local parks and recreation departments should continue to educate outdoor recreation enthusiasts to be cognizant of the impacts they have on others to minimize user conflicts and increase economic and natural resource sustainability.
- Local, state and federal government should provide the appropriate number and venue of opportunities for the Commonwealth's population to enjoy and access outdoor environments.
- State and local DCR and local parks and recreation departments should provide opportunities to learn responsible use of public lands through the teaching of *Leave No Trace* and *Tread Lightly!* skills.

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- DCR and other natural resource agencies should provide leadership and example in operations and maintenance on behalf of conservation and outdoor ethics.
- Property owners should promote management techniques that promote safe outdoor recreation environments.

Land Conservation

The land conservation maps for the region includes existing conservation land in the following categories.

- State/Federal conservation lands: split by state and federal management agencies
- Local open space lands
- Conservation easements
- Designated historic districts and eligible historic districts

The acreages for each land conservation category are shown on the map. Future land conservation needs and direction should relate to the remaining resources that warrant protection for water quality, habitat, quality of life and economic viability of the area. Many organizations work together with localities and the region to provide an array of land conservation mechanisms. (See Chapter III. Land Conservation).

Land Trusts Operating in the PDC

The Land Trusts operating in the region include the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, James River Association, Piedmont Environmental Council, Rivanna Conservation Society, Blue Ridge Foothills Conservancy, and Friends of the Rappahannock.

General recommendation for land conservation include:

- All localities should continue to promote the conservation and preservation of open space through land acquisition, conservation easements, stewardship agreements, the development of agricultural and forestal districts, the outright purchase of land or any of the many open space protection strategies presented in Chapter 3, Land Conservation.
- As population growth accelerates development pressure, land conservation and sound land use decision-making must become prominent considerations in all land-planning efforts. Localities, state agencies, and private organizations must make deliberate decisions about how to focus and prioritize their land conservation efforts. To do so, they must develop a method of targeting conservation efforts, using green infrastructure land planning techniques, geographic information systems, local comprehensive plans, and decision support systems such as the Virginia Conservation Lands Needs Assessment.

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Meeting conservation goals will require partnerships among all agencies.

Green Infrastructure Recommendations

The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission is beginning work on a green infrastructure plan for the localities comprising the district. Green infrastructure is defined as “an interconnected network of green spaces that conserves natural ecosystem values and functions and provides associated benefits to human populations.” Benefits of green infrastructure include improved water quality and quantity, preservation of biodiversity by providing large habitat areas and corridors for movement between them, provision of areas for recreation, stormwater and flooding control, protection of air quality, enhancement of community appearance, increased property values, and an attraction for tourists.

The following are regional recommendations for implementation of green infrastructure planning.

- With development accelerating throughout the region, it is critical to identify important natural systems and features so they can be properly managed for the future. A green infrastructure plan is needed to help guide the location of undeveloped land for improved water quality and quantity, preservation of biodiversity, provision of areas of recreation, stormwater and flood control, protection of air quality, enhancement of community appearance, increased property values, and an attraction for tourists. There is a real need for coordination among groups promoting these values. More education and incentives are needed to reach land conservation goals.
- Local governments should take the lead in securing green infrastructure through appropriate use of planning tools.
- Regional and local governments should adopt and implement the green-infrastructure planning model to ensure sustainable development of their community and a high quality of life for future generations.
- Local and regional agencies and conservation organizations should receive information and education about green infrastructure planning, including guidance on local zoning initiatives that lead to changes in community design and transportation systems.
- Sources of funding for local government green infrastructure initiatives should be identified and sought.

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Programs

The programs listed in this subsection outline recommendations related to statewide initiatives for outdoor recreation and conservation. The program areas include: Trails and Greenways, Blueways and Water Access, Historic and Landscape Resources, Scenic Resources, Scenic Highways/Virginia Byways, Scenic Rivers, Watersheds and Environmental and Land Stewardship Education.

Trails & Greenways

Trail and greenway planning initiated at the local and regional level is important for the future development of an infrastructure that promotes public health. Only a handful of local governments have a formally adopted trails plan. With only a small percentage of existing plans approved and integrated into the locality's comprehensive plan, there is a risk that development will continue to occur without consideration for people who want to integrate exercise into their daily routine by walking, jogging or cycling to points of interest. Each locality should develop a trail and greenway plan, bicycle and pedestrian plan, and/or green infrastructure plan incorporating trails that will be adopted as a formal component of the comprehensive plan. In the plan, an effort should be made to link existing and proposed public lands and other resources valued by the community with businesses and neighborhoods.

- Local governments should have a greenways and trails component in their comprehensive plan that provides for a variety of leisure trail experiences and promotes pedestrian and bicycle transportation alternatives.
- State, regional and local governments should include funds for trail development, management and maintenance in annual capital and operating budgets, and seek creative ways to provide incentive funding for trail development.
- State, regional and local governments should strengthen the public's understanding of the connection between trails and public health and establish policies that support pedestrian and bicycle facilities in road construction and development/redevelopment projects. A particular effort should be made to link neighborhoods to schools in cooperation with the Alliance for Community Choice in Transportation.
- DCR should partner with Planning District Commissions to a) facilitate communications between trail providers, users, and policy makers, b) encourage the private sector to improve regional and statewide trail opportunities and support and c) focus on regional trail networks to establish a trunkline statewide trail system.
- Local and regional trail managers should provide information about their trail at trailheads, in brochures and on Web sites so that users can choose sections

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within their skill and capability levels.

Trunkline trails are statewide corridors connecting urban, suburban and rural areas of Virginia. Plans to establish routes and connect with other local and regional trails are important to the success of these major trails. Local, regional and state planners should work together to mediate issues that arise when trails cross jurisdictional boundaries, to provide bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure (including signage and amenities) and to get information out to the public. Trunkline trails existing or underway in this region include:

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- 1 The **James River Heritage Trail** is proposed to follow America's Founding River from the Chesapeake Bay to the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. The trail follows the old Kanawha Canal towpath, park trails, scenic riverside roadways and urban riverfront trails deep into the heart of Virginia.
- 2 The **Appalachian Trail** is an existing National Scenic Trail. Because of this special designation, localities that host the Appalachian Trail should be cognizant of protecting viewsheds from existing overlooks and other scenic values of the corridor. For more than 75 years the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and its member clubs have worked voluntarily with federal, state and local governments, as well as numerous individual landowners, to solve problems associated with the acquisition, development, administration, management and maintenance of the trail. Now trail managers worry about fewer bird species, booming populations of pests, neglected trail maintenance and soil erosion, smog, and creeping suburbs. The National Park Service and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy are working to turn the trail into a "mega-transect," an outdoor lab where scientists will gather data on human impacts to the trail.

The following are greenway/trail proposals for this region:

- 3 A **Rivanna River Trail** in Fluvanna and Albemarle counties should be developed to connect the Town of Columbia to the City of Charlottesville.
- 4 The **Three-Notched Trail** should be developed to connect the City of Charlottesville to Mechums River. This trail could eventually be extended to the Crozet tunnel.
- 5 Continue development of the **Blue Ridge Rail Trail**, a joint effort between Nelson and Amherst counties.
- 6 Continue development of the **Rockfish Valley Loop Trail** in Nelson County. Improve trailheads with toilets, kiosks, signage and interpretive markers.
- 7 Develop the Fluvanna Heritage Trail utilizing the old Airline Railroad, connecting Gateway Park to Palmyra Elementary School and recreational and historic sites along the Rivanna River. This trail will connect to the

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Nature/Wildlife Trail and to **Long Island Creek** located near Palmyra. This site has been named an American Treasure by the White House Millennium Council and the National Trust.

Blueways & Water Access (Boating, Beaches & Swimming, Pier and Bank Fishing, Natural Area, Blueways)

Beach Access Recommendations

- Cooperative agreements among localities and other agencies, as well as private landowners, are encouraged in order to meet the increasing need for public access to beaches and other water-related recreational resources.
- In cooperation with localities, state land management agencies should identify strategies to make additional waterfront resources available for public use.
- Adequate support facilities and services, such as restrooms, concessions, parking and maintenance should be a priority for existing and proposed public water and beach access areas.
- Public agencies need to acquire and/or maintain access to existing public beaches that may be jeopardized by changes in land use or development activities.

Water Trail Recommendations

- The navigable rivers of the region should be managed as water trails. Public access areas and support facilities should be developed at appropriate intervals along these rivers.
- Regional and local governments should work with state agencies to market water trails through brochures, maps, signage and the media.
- Local jurisdictions should encourage both private and public landowners to operate rest stops and boat-in-only campgrounds along water trails at suitable site locations along the region's rivers and streams.

- 8 The Rivanna Conservation Society's Rivanna River Water Trail is being developed under a grant from the National Park Service. Also, the Fluvanna County Historical Society and the Virginia Canals Society are attempting to have all the locks on the Rivanna Canal added to the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

Water Access Recommendations

Access to Virginia's rivers and streams is necessary for meeting water-related recreational demands. Access considerations for the region include the following:

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- 9 The feasibility of providing picnicking and primitive and canoe-in camping should be investigated for the **Hardware and James River wildlife management areas**, as well as other large tracts of land on major rivers in the region. Where appropriate, portages should be created around dams and other river obstacles.
- 10 A canoe put-in should be considered on the Rivanna River between Palmyra and the Town of Columbia.
- 11 The Rockfish Valley Loop Trail provides public access to the South Fork of the Rockfish River and Reid's Creek. Parking is available at both Spruce Creek Park and Rockfish River trailhead. Service facilities for the public are needed at these access points.

Historic and Landscape Resources

- Each locality in the region should make every effort to identify historic and archaeological resources within each jurisdiction that can be used for economic, tourism, recreational and educational benefits, and should include those resources in all local land use planning and decision-making processes to promote preservation and protection of these resources.
 - Local historic attractions, historical societies, museums and other tourism organizations in the region should build partnerships with the Virginia Association of Museums, Virginia Civil War Trails, the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities/Preservation Virginia, the Virginia Main Street Program and others to enhance local heritage tourism, educational and recreational offerings.
 - Local governments and private organizations owning historic properties in the region should be encouraged to manage those properties effectively for long-term protection of the public trust and to maximize public benefit consistent with the nature of the historic property.
- 14 DCR and local governments as desired should support designation for a nationally recognized historic corridor from Monticello in Virginia to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania (**Journey Through Hallowed Ground** www.hallowedground.org) and to provide support after its passed if it is approved by Congress.
 - 15 The **Holland-Page House**, owned by the Historical Society in Fluvanna County is being developed as a museum of rural life from 1865-1900. A nature trail is in the planning stages from the log cabin to the Long Island Creek. This site has been declared an American Treasure and could be linked at some stage to a future Rivanna River Trail.

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Scenic Resources Recommendations

The Thomas Jefferson Planning District contains some of the most beautiful areas of the state. The unique scenic quality and sense of place is derived from the rolling hills, farms and forests of the Piedmont framed by the Blue Ridge Mountains. This pastoral character, graced with significant cultural and historic resources, maintains the region's economic vitality as a tourist attraction, and also as an attractive place to live and work.

Each locality should conduct a visual resources assessment as part of their green infrastructure inventory and mapping process. Consider using universities and other institutions to help supplement and support this effort.

Localities should ensure that a component of their comprehensive plan provides for the protection and enhancement of scenic resources, visual character and viewsheds.

Localities should develop corridor management plans for scenic byways, blueways, and greenways to assure preservation of the scenic quality of the corridor.

The following scenic corridors should receive consideration by local and regional plans for viewshed management. Management of Virginia's scenic resources is linked to economic prosperity of the state as it relates to tourism and the overall aesthetic character of the Commonwealth for business, industry and residents.

- Shenandoah National Park and Skyline Drive
- Blue Ridge Parkway
- Journey Through Hallowed Ground Corridor
- Appalachian Trail

Scenic Highways/Virginia Byways

Scenic roads provide leisure time experiences and connect travelers to various scenic, historic, cultural and recreational sites. Since driving for pleasure and visiting historic sites are in the top three recreational activities, these resources become a critical link for communities. The preservation of their inherent qualities is critical for attractive and welcoming communities. Designation of these roads, through the Virginia Byway Program, provides opportunities for promotion and protection. Many collaborative efforts have used scenic roads to tell a significant story of our history and natural resources. These thematic trails are further discussed in the Scenic Byways subsection of Chapter 7. Following are general and specific recommendations for scenic roads:

For the first time in Virginia's history, four roads received national designation in 2005. The Blue Ridge Parkway (Blue Ridge Parkway), Colonial Parkway (Colonial National Historical Park), and the George Washington Memorial Parkway (George Washington Memorial Parkway) received All-American Road designation. The Skyline Drive (Shenandoah National Park) was designated a National Scenic Byway. The Americas Byway Program enables the localities to focus on enhancing the traveling and visitor

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experience and managing, restoring and preserving scenic or historic roads and allows the locality to apply for funding through the National Scenic Byways Grant Program.

- Local jurisdictions should recognize and nominate scenic roads for designation as Virginia Byways.
- Local governments should partner with other state, local and professional organizations to determine implementation strategies to protect the scenic assets of byway corridors.
- There has been a tremendous interest in thematic trails including, Civil War trails, the Wilderness Road Trail, the Birding and Wildlife Trails, the Revolutionary War trails, the African-American Heritage Trail system, and other driving tour routes. The next logical step after the *Scenic Roads in Virginia* map would be to develop a series of regional maps or booklets that describe and help locate the resources and services found in all sections of the state.

As a testament to the interesting character of the landscape, a number of roads have been designated as Virginia Byways, including the following routes:

Nelson-Routes 6, 655, 151, 664, 800 and a portion of 29

Albemarle-Routes 250, 614, 601, 20, 22, 231, 6, 29, 151, and a portion of 692

Fluvanna-Routes 6 and 15

Louisa-Route 613

The following roads have been recommended for consideration as Virginia Byways:

- 16 Nelson and Albemarle-additional portion of **Route 29**
- 17 Albemarle and Fluvanna-**Route 53**
- 18 Albemarle-**additional portion of 692**
- 19 Greene-**Route 230**
- 20 Albemarle and Nelson-The designation of a **James River Byway** consisting of roads that closely parallel the James River Bateau Festival trail should be considered. The corridor would include **Route 626**.
- 21 Greene and Albemarle-**Route 810** from Stanardsville in Greene County to Crozet in Albemarle County.

Scenic Rivers

An ever-increasing awareness of Virginia's Scenic Rivers is a direct result of concerns for water quality, bio-diversity, scenic landscapes, and water quantity. River resources are a critical component for natural resource planning. In this region there are currently three designated scenic river segments; **Moormans River** (Charlottesville Reservoir to confluence with Mechums River), **Rivanna River** (Woolen Mills to confluence with the James River), and **Rockfish River** (Route 693 at Schuyler to confluence with James River). In order to more successfully protect river resources the following general and specific recommendations are given.

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- Local government should nominate candidate streams and rivers for study and possible Scenic River designation.
- DCR should assist local governments with development of planning tools (e.g., land-use overlays, corridor management plans) that will afford special recognition and protection to Virginia's Scenic Rivers.

22 The **James River** from Wingina to Maidens has been evaluated and was found to be worthy of designation.

The following river segments are recommended for evaluation to determine suitability for inclusion into the Virginia Scenic River Program:

23 **Rapidan River headwaters** from Germanna to Mechums.

24 All of **Mechums River**.

25 The **South Anna River** from Lake Gordonsville to Route 673.

26 All of the **Thornton River**.

27 The **North Anna** from Lake Anna to Route 738.

28 The **James River** from Bent to Wingina.

29 The **South River** in Greene County.

30 The **Hardware River** in Fluvanna County.

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Watershed Resources

This region is in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. (List of local watershed groups will be included in a later draft).

General watershed recommendation:

Regional and local governments should protect the management of watersheds by integrating watershed management planning with local land use ordinances and comprehensive plans.

Watersheds Recommendations

- 31 Convene a goal-based watershed initiative to create a comprehensive watershed framework for addressing the needs outlined in the 2002 Rivanna Watershed Needs Assessment.

Environmental and Land Stewardship Education Recommendations

More and more both children and adults are losing touch with our environment. Because we generally don't see where food comes from or where waste goes, it is important that federal, state, regional and local agencies educate citizens about human impacts to natural resources and the need for stewardship and conservation. These agencies should work together to promote the value and benefits of outdoor experiences to develop an environmentally literate citizenry.

The Ivy Creek Foundation is an educational, nature-oriented 501(C) 3 non-profit organization in Charlottesville, Virginia whose mission is to preserve and manage the Ivy Creek and Ragged Mountain Natural Areas for education and appreciation. **The Ivy Creek Foundation Education Building**, capable of seating 65 people, is a green building available without charge to state and local community organizations for environmental meetings and workshops.

- 32 Continue to develop the **Rockfish Valley Farm** for environmental education and agri-tourism experiences.
- 33 Continue development of an outdoor amphitheater and programs at **Pleasant Grove site**

Federal Facilities

National Parks Recommendations

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- Continue to develop multi-modal connections to NPS sites, as a component of an interconnected, statewide system of trails and greenways. Support efforts underway at parks such as Petersburg, Appomattox, and Richmond that are currently engaged in efforts to link battlefields, historic sites, parks, and communities.
- Work with state agencies to elevate battlefield protection in various land conservation, scenic viewshed, and heritage preservation initiatives. Utilizes partnerships to identify, prioritize, and develop strategies to protect critical resources.
- Continue collaborative efforts to connect people to heritage, outdoor recreation, and educational opportunities and resources.

- 34 An effort should be made to reduce air pollution that limits viewsheds from Shenandoah National Park and the general vicinity. The issue of changing land use adjacent to the park also needs to be examined further. Local governments need to support efforts to encourage adjacent landowners, localities, and planning district commissions to develop a scenic overlay zone adjacent to and within the viewshed of the Shenandoah National Park as part of a multi-regional park viewshed planning process.
- 35 There is a need to develop a Blue Ridge Visitor Information Center/Services Center in the vicinity of I-64 near the intersection with Skyline Drive and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Shenandoah National Park received more than 1.3 million visitors in 1999 and the Blue Ridge Parkway in Virginia receives an estimated 10 million visitors annually. A partnership among the National Park Service, the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, the state of Virginia and surrounding localities could be created to plan, build, and operate a complex near Rockfish Gap or Afton Mountain that would compliment the visitor centers envisioned in the Shenandoah Battlefield National Historic District. Local governments also need to support efforts to encourage adjacent landowners, localities and planning district commissions to develop a scenic overlay zone adjacent to and within the viewshed of the Blue Ridge Parkway as part of a multi-regional parkway viewshed planning process.

State Facilities

State Parks

The approval of the 2002 General Obligation Bond referendum resulted in funds that benefit the entire state park system. Funds were allocated for new state park acquisitions and for the acquisition of lands adjacent to existing parks, thus providing

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continued protection of dwindling open space. The bond also provided funding for numerous new facilities, improvements to existing facilities and trails, and for the development of new trails.

In accordance with Code Section 10.1-200.1 - State park master planning, master plans must be developed for new state parks prior to the implementation of any new development. Existing master plans are to be re-evaluated every five years. The master planning process requires public involvement. An advisory committee, comprised of local officials, representatives from various user groups, businesses, tourism, adjacent landowners, and others who are stakeholders in the site, convenes to participate throughout the master planning process. Public meetings are held to gain public input in addition to the presentation to the Board of Conservation and Recreation, also open to the public. Any significant change to a state park master plan or park additions in excess of \$500,000 requires public input.

- 36** The Middle Valley area beyond Charlottesville has been identified as a desirable location for the development of a state park.

State Fish and Wildlife Management Areas Recommendations

The Rapidan, James River, and Hardware River wildlife management areas are located in this region. The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries should continue to investigate opportunities to acquire in-holdings in their wildlife management areas and to improve each area with trails and other structures for wildlife viewing and other outdoor recreation. They should also acquire additional lands wherever feasible to provide additional access for public hunting, fishing and other wildlife viewing recreation.

- 37** The **Hardware and James River wildlife management areas** offer the potential for developing sections of the James River Heritage Trail.

State Forests Recommendations

The following are general recommendations for State Forests in the Thomas Jefferson Region:

- The Department of Forestry (DOF) will coordinate with and seek the assistance of local trail and river user organizations to develop forest trails and publish maps for each state forest as well as establish greenways and blueways for public use.
- Localities should work with DOF to stress the importance of the urban canopy and help localities set goals.
- Localities should work with DOF to demonstrate the importance of a healthy urban tree canopy and develop strategies to enhance the urban forest.

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- 38 Expand demonstration and research opportunities, as well as facilities for hiking and outdoor study at **Lesesne State Forest**. An updated management plan is being prepared. The emphasis on the forest will continue to be research on restoration of American Chestnut. Developing a multi-use trail is also planned.

Natural Areas

Naked Mountain (due to close Dec. 1, 2006) and Crawford Knob (due to close before Dec. 31, 2006 but the way it's going, might not happen before this goes to press so might need to remove.), both in Nelson County, are located within the Thomas Jefferson Planning District.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation has, as of November 2006, documented 122 occurrences of 64 rare species and natural communities in the Thomas Jefferson Planning District. Sixteen species are globally rare and four are federally threatened or endangered. Forty-six conservation sites have been identified in the district; of which 33 (72%) have received some level of protection through ownership or management by state, federal and non-government organizations. However, only XX sites are protected well enough to ensure the long-term viability of the rare species and natural communities they support.

DCR recommends that all unprotected conservation sites, and all unprotected portions of partially protected sites, be targeted for future land conservation efforts. The appropriate method of protection will vary with each site but may include placing the site on Virginia's Registry of Natural Areas, developing a voluntary management agreement with the landowner, securing a conservation easement through a local land trust, acquiring the site through a locality or local land trust, dedicating the site as a natural area preserve with the current owner, or acquiring the site as a state-owned natural area preserve. Within the Thomas Jefferson Planning District, DCR is particularly interested in protecting:

- Large blocks of native forests
- High quality stream corridors
- Rare wetland and rock outcrop communities

Information about the location of conservation sites and the natural heritage resources they contain, as well as management assistance, is available to local planners from DCR's Natural Heritage staff. For a discussion of the Natural Heritage Program, see page xxx.

Transportation

Transportation is integral to conservation and outdoor recreation. General recommendations relating to transportation for the region include:

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- Greater emphasis needs to be placed on providing alternatives to the use of private automobiles for daily activities. Transit systems, bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, improved community design, as well as a change in people's attitudes toward transportation alternatives will be needed for the transportation system of the future to meet capacity needs and energy constraints.
(www.vtrans.org)
- Priority should be given to eliminating potential transportation barriers for the public, and improving the linkages of recreation areas across major transportation corridors.
- Local governments should encourage the development of a permanent process for integrating the recommendations of local public health agencies and active living into all phases of land use planning.

Virginia is home to more of the United States Numbered Bicycle Route system than any other state. USBR 76 passes through this region, crossing east-west from Yorktown to the Kentucky border in Dickenson County. This federal route is officially recognized by AASHTO, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials and shown on VDOT's official County Maps.

This route is also recognized by Adventure Cycling Association, which is dedicated to establishing a national system of long-distance routes. The Trans-America Bicycle Trail crosses the country from Oregon to Virginia, and shares the same alignment as USBR 76 in Virginia.

- 39 **USBR 76** (The Trans-America Bicycle Trail) should be enhanced and signage maintained. When road improvements are made, a bike lane should be added, and facilities for bicyclists should be available along the route.
- 40 Implement the Jefferson Area Bicycle, Pedestrian and Greenways Plan adopted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Planning District Commission in 2004.
- 41 Implement the proposed greenway corridors in the 2002 Nelson County Comprehensive Plan, the 1991 Bicycle Plan for the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County, the Scottsville Bicycle and Pedestrian Integrated Plan, as well as recommendations from the U.S. Route 29 Pedestrian Study.

Other State Facilities (Colleges, Universities, Estuarine Research Reserves)

The following state-owned properties contain significant acreage of undeveloped land that may have recreational potential. Each site should be assessed, and cooperative use agreements should be developed where appropriate.

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- 42 The **Birdwood** property in Albemarle County is a 148-acre tract of land owned by the University of Virginia.
- 43 Undeveloped portions of the **Piedmont Community College** campus in Albemarle County may have recreational potential.
- 44 Undeveloped portions of the **Blue Ridge Hospital** property in Albemarle County may have recreational potential.
- 45 The **Virginia Department of Corrections** owns a 194-acre tract in Louisa County, which may have recreational potential.
- 46 The **Milton Airport** property located in Eastern Albemarle County on the Rivanna River, owned by the University of Virginia, has tremendous potential as a riverside park. The property's 172 acres, which is flat, could be a key to meeting open field space needs. A cooperative venture between the university, the city and county could help meet needs in the region.

Local Parks and Recreation Recommendations

Sixty-nine Virginia counties have full-time parks and recreation departments, as do 21 incorporated towns, and all cities, except Emporia. These departments serve a vast majority of citizens across the state. While new parks and recreation departments are formed occasionally across the state, it is a troubling trend that localities are dropping their parks and recreation departments and turning their programs over to private organizations such as the YMCA. We have seen a substantial reduction in public parks and recreation departments since the last VOP was published. While private organizations may provide recreation programming in the short term, they are not charged with planning for the long term recreation, park and open space needs of a community.

All of the localities in the Thomas Jefferson Region are served by a parks and recreation department. According to the *Commonwealth of Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, Comparative Report on Local Government Revenues and Expenditures* (Year Ended June 30, 2005), per capita spending on parks and recreation for each locality in this region was: Charlottesville, \$183.15; Albemarle, \$21.94; Fluvanna, \$21.35; Greene, \$6.40; Louisa, \$29.80; Nelson \$11.69. This compares to a statewide average per capita spending on parks and recreation of \$55.31, including \$85.51 from Towns, \$43.75 from counties, and \$76.45 per capita spending on parks and recreation from cities in Virginia.

- Localities should appoint a parks and recreation commission to provide citizen leadership with regard to parks and recreation issues and concerns. Commissions have been effective in many localities to enhance park areas and recreation

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programs. This is most important in localities where no parks and recreation department exists.

- Commitments to the maintenance, management, and development of local parks and recreational systems are necessary. Localities should explore alternative methods of funding, such as set-aside ordinances, fees and charges and public/private partnerships. The establishment of a “friends group,” which could possibly evolve into a “park foundation,” should be considered for the local parks and recreation department. This citizens group could be a source of volunteers, as well as a source for community support and other resources.
- Local parks and recreation departments should initiate a structured volunteer program that recruits, trains and retains volunteers, and recognizes their contributions to parks, programs and the overall quality of life in communities.
- All localities should develop and implement hiking and bicycling plans to connect parks, schools and neighborhoods. Encouraging biking and walking within the community can enhance community health and spirit.
- Parks and programs need to be accessible to special populations, including senior adults and persons with disabilities.
- Consideration by localities of the benefit of a school/park cooperative agreement could enhance use of school and park facilities. School systems and local parks and recreation departments should cooperate in the design of new or renovated facilities. In order to increase local access, localities should consider cooperative management for the recreational use of private, corporate, state or federally owned lands.
- All public playgrounds, including school and park playgrounds, should meet or exceed the guidelines established by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission and published in the USCPSC Handbook for Public Playground Safety. All equipment should have a cushioned surface under and around it.
- Localities should explore turning abandoned landfills into new and needed parks. From Virginia Beach to New York City to Berkeley California, localities have found they can add parkland, while removing community eyesores. http://ga0.org/ct/x7LKtNM1_RZ8/landfill_to_parks. There may also be potential to reclaim strip mine areas for recreation.

- 47 Development at Fluvanna County’s publicly owned, 960-acre **Pleasant Grove** site includes an accessible trailhead, access road, ball fields, playground, dog park, restrooms, decorative gardens, Heritage Trailhead Museum, an outdoor classroom and connecting trails. Renovation of the historic home and potential future uses are being studied.

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Private Sector Recommendations

The private sector plays a significant role in providing recreational opportunities in the commonwealth. As many localities prepare for substantial increases in residential growth, consideration must be given for the inclusion of mechanisms within the permitting process to encourage or require the preservation of open space and the development of recreational amenities to meet communities' needs.

Developed campgrounds, resident summer camps for children, golf courses, tennis courts, swimming pools, marinas and indoor recreational facilities help meet the needs identified in the 2006 *Virginia Outdoors Survey*. Within the Thomas Jefferson region, entrepreneurial opportunities exist for the establishment of outfitter services for canoeing and kayaking, boat launches, canoe-in campgrounds, multi-field sports complexes and swimming pools. Private landowners might consider fee-based hunting, fishing and boating access. Recreational amenities at wineries and other farms will draw additional visitors to the site and region.

The following general recommendations are made to improve private sector provisions of outdoor recreation.

- Encourage public outdoor recreation providers to partner with multiple private sector organizations.
- **Recreational use agreements and/or easements** should be encouraged for private property owners providing public recreation opportunities and to make more private lands available for recreation. Efforts should be made by DCR and local parks and recreation departments to spread the word about the **Virginia Landowner Liability Law** to existing and potential private sector providers of outdoor recreation. This law reduces the risk of claims associated with recreational use of private lands, and may be especially applicable for trail and greenway development.
- Local, state and federal outdoor recreation providers should support **corporate recognition programs** and improve corporate recognition for small business willing to incorporate outdoor recreation needs in an environmentally friendly manner.
- A hostel convenient to the I-64/I-81 corridors, the Skyline Drive, The Appalachian Trail and Shenandoah National Park should be considered.